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**SECRETARY PRITCHARD ANNOUNCES \$500,000 GRANT
FOR CONSERVATION LAND PURCHASE IN SOUTH HADLEY**

Acquisition will Protect 284 Sensitive Acres Adjacent to and Along Connecticut River

Environmental Affairs Secretary Stephen Pritchard today announced a \$500,000 grant to assist the Town of South Hadley and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) in acquiring 284 sensitive acres of open space property along the Connecticut River. The tract of land is a vulnerable piece that is comprised of sensitive, diverse and unique environmental resources. These funds are being distributed under the state's Self-Help Program, which is administered by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA). \$300,000 from Mount Holyoke College joined funds from the Town of South Hadley, TPL and EOEA to meet the total acquisition cost of \$1,550,000.

"These acres near the Connecticut River provide critical wildlife habitat and enable us to protect archeologically significant sites and create important new recreational opportunities," said Secretary Pritchard. "This acquisition is made possible by a group of partners who care deeply about this land's environmental significance and it represents smart growth that respects the proper balance between conservation and sound development."

The 284 acres being acquired include Bachelor Brook and Stony Brook and the property runs from the Town Farm on Route 47 South to the Connecticut River. The 3,000 feet of Connecticut River frontage includes the confluences of both Bachelor and Stony Brooks. The acquisition assists South Hadley in its efforts to preserve open space, forest and agricultural lands as growth pressures extend beyond Springfield and Holyoke.

"This particular parcel is a jewel and the ability to preserve such a large piece of land adjacent to the Connecticut River will benefit generations long after we have gone," said Representative John Scibak (D-South Hadley).

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Massachusetts' Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program has identified thirteen rare or threatened species on the property. As a condition of the Self-Help grant, the property must be permanently dedicated to passive recreational uses such as hiking, hunting, fishing, cross country skiing and horseback riding. An extensive and well-used trail system already exists on the property. The property was awarded the maximum grant award possible from EOE's Self-Help Program due to its wealth of natural resources and recreational opportunities.

"This beautiful piece of property has been a top land acquisition and preservation priority of South Hadley's for years and we are thrilled to finally see it come to be," said Richard Constant, Chair, South Hadley Board of Selectmen.

"This land is important for the Town of South Hadley and Mount Holyoke is delighted to have had the opportunity to be a part of the property's permanent protection," said Mary Jo Maydew, Vice President for Finance and Administration at Mount Holyoke College.

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